

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

DOCKET NO. 2021-91-E - ORDER NO. 2021-819

DECEMBER 21, 2021

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| IN RE: Joint Petition of Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC |) | ORDER APPROVING |
| and Duke Energy Progress, LLC for Limited |) | REQUEST FOR LIMITED |
| Waivers and Request for Approval of |) | WAIVERS AND |
| Updated Service Regulations |) | UPDATED SERVICE |
| |) | REGULATIONS |

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the “Commission”) on the Joint Petition of Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC (“DEC”) and Duke Energy Progress, LLC (“DEP” and together with DEC, the “Companies”) for approval of their request for limited waivers and updated service regulations related to the implementation of the Customer Connect platform.

A. Background

On March 10, 2021, DEC and DEP filed an Application in Docket No. 2021-91-E requesting a limited waiver of S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-339 and 103-321 and Sections III.A.2(a)-(b) of the Companies’ Code of Conduct, which would allow the Companies to fully implement the Customer Connect platform.

After review and discussion with the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (“ORS”), the Companies filed an Amended Petition on August 26, 2021. The Amended Petition removed the Companies’ requests for a waiver of S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-339 and 103-321 as unnecessary. The Companies’ Amended Petition requested approval of the updated service regulations to bring DEP in line with DEC’s current practices and to

promote uniformity across the Companies' service territories. The Amended Petition also included a request for approval of the Quarterly Budget Billing Plan and correlating service regulation updates. The Companies also removed the request related to the Revert to Owner Programs from the Amended Petition, instead making the request for that program in a separate petition in the same Docket. The requests included in the Companies' Amended Petition would allow DEC and DEP to upgrade their billing system infrastructure to support dynamic rate designs; standardize the monthly billing period; and grant the Companies more flexibility in reviewing a customer's payment history to potentially eliminate the need for a deposit when relocating from one Duke Energy jurisdiction to another.

On September 17, 2021, ORS filed a letter notifying the Commission of its review of the Amended Petition and that it did not oppose DEP's proposed service regulation language regarding the billing of interval-load rate schedules, the Companies' proposed service regulation language regarding the billing month, the Quarterly Budget Billing Plans, the limited waiver of Section III.A.2(a)-(b) of the Companies' Code of Conduct, or the changes to service regulations and tariffs related to the extension of the non-residential remittance period.

B. Discussion

i. Service Regulations Regarding Interval-Load Rate Schedules

S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-339(2) outlines the information that must be included on customers' bills, including the date on which the meter was read and the reading of the meter at the beginning and end of the period for which the bill is rendered. However, the calculation of bills on a dynamic rate design reflect billing determinants that may change

during the billing period. DEP has requested to update its service regulations to include an exception for interval-billed rates, which will allow DEP to omit meter readings for interval-billed rates, to provide the date on which usage was last obtained from the meter to its customers and promote consistency in billing statements between the Companies' service territories. DEC's service regulations already contain an exception for interval-billed rates. ORS has reviewed DEP's request for approval of the updated service regulations related to interval-billed rates and has no objection.

The Commission finds the request for waiver of S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-339(2) is reasonable, given the nature of the information appropriate for inclusion in an interval-billed rate bill. Therefore, the Commission concludes that the waiver is appropriate under existing statutes, rules, and regulations and in the public interest.

ii. Service Regulations Regarding Billing Month

According to the Companies' Amended Petition, the Customer Connect platform will standardize processes across jurisdictions so that proration of fixed charges will occur when the billing month includes fewer than twenty-six (26) days or more than thirty-four (34) days.

S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-321 provides that bills must be rendered on a monthly basis not less than twenty-eight (28) days or more than thirty-four (34) days. DEC's service regulations currently include an exception from this regulation and provide that bills must be rendered monthly within a period of not less than twenty-five (25) days or more than thirty-five (35) days. DEP's service regulations are in line with the regulation, providing for a period of twenty-eight (28) to thirty-four (34) days.

DEC requests to update its service regulations so that the billing period will be defined as fewer than twenty-six (26) days or more than thirty-four (34) days. DEP requests to update its service regulations so that the billing period will be defined as fewer than twenty-six (26) days or more than thirty-four (34) days. These minor changes are reasonable, will standardize the billing period across the Companies' jurisdictions, and are unlikely to detract from customer service if approved. ORS has reviewed the Companies' request for approval of the updated service regulations related to the billing period and has no objection.

The Commission finds the requested update to service regulations is unlikely to have any negative effect on customer service and will further standardize the customer billing period and experience across the DEC and DEP service territories. Therefore, the Commission concludes that approval of the request is appropriate under existing statutes, rules, and regulations and in the public interest.

iii. Quarterly Budget Billing Plan

In the Amended Petition, the Companies request approval of their Quarterly Budget Billing Plan, which will allow customers to have an averaged, equal monthly bill. This program will be offered in addition to the Annual Budget Billing Plan and will provide customers with more options for how they pay their bills and more control over their monthly payment amounts.

S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-349(5) provides that “[a]n electrical utility may provide payment plans wherein the charge for each billing period is the estimated total annual bill divided by the number of billing periods prescribed by the plan. The difference between

the actual and estimated annual bill is to be resolved by one payment at the end of the equal payment year, unless otherwise approved by the commission.”

The Companies submitted updated service regulations, which address the availability of the Quarterly Budget Billing Plan customers. ORS has reviewed the Companies’ request for approval of the Quarterly Budget Billing Plan and has no objection.

The Commission finds the proposed Quarterly Budget Billing Plan will provide customers with more options for how they pay their bills and more control over their monthly payment amounts. Therefore, the Commission concludes that approval is appropriate pursuant to and consistent with S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-349(5), and that such approval is in the public interest.

iv. Waiver of Section III.A.2(a)-(b)

DEC, DEP, Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. (“Piedmont”), and other affiliates are bound by the Code of Conduct pursuant to Regulatory Condition 6.1, approved by the North Carolina Utilities Commission in its September 29, 2016 Order Approving Merger Subject to Regulatory Conditions and Code of Conduct in Docket Nos. E-2, Sub 1095; E-7, Sub 1000; and G-9, Sub 682. The Code of Conduct was adopted as applicable to South Carolina via this Commission’s Order No. 2016-772, issued in Docket No. 2011-158-E on November 2, 2016, and as updated in a filing made on October 9, 2018. The Companies’ Code of Conduct establishes the minimum guidelines and rules that apply to the relationships, transactions, and activities involving the public utility operations of DEC, DEP, Piedmont, Duke Energy, other affiliates, or the Nonpublic Utility Operations of DEC, DEP, and Piedmont, to the extent such relationships, activities, and transactions affect the public utility operations of DEC, DEP, and Piedmont in their respective service areas.

In their Amended Petition, the Companies request a waiver of Section III.A.2(a)-(b) of the Code of Conduct. These sections of the Code of Conduct prohibit the disclosure of customer information – which includes information related to billing history and credit history – to non-affiliates in the absence of customer consent. The requested waiver will allow the Companies to utilize a customer’s information to perform an automated review of the customer’s payment history when a customer is transferring service from one Duke Energy jurisdiction to another. This will provide an immediate benefit to customers with a satisfactory payment history by simplifying the process and potentially eliminating the need for additional credit checks or a security deposit.

ORS has reviewed the Companies’ request for a waiver and has no objection.

The Commission finds the requested waiver of portions of the Companies’ Code of Conduct will benefit customers moving from one Duke Energy jurisdiction to another, and will not cause any negative effect to other customers receiving service by the Companies. Therefore, the Commission concludes that the limited waiver of Section III.A.2(a)-(b) of the Code of Conduct is appropriate under existing statutes, rules, and regulations and in the public interest.

v. Service Regulations & Tariffs Regarding Non-Residential Remittance Period

The Companies have requested to update their service regulations to extend the remittance period for non-residential customers from 15 to 25 days. Extending the remittance period to 25 days will benefit non-residential customers by providing them with additional time to process and remit their payments in a timely manner, and it will

standardize the remittance period for residential and non-residential customers. ORS has reviewed the Companies' request and has no objection.

The Commission finds increasing the remittance period for non-residential customers will standardize the remittance period for residential and non-residential customers and will not negatively affect any customer or group of customers. The Commission concludes that approval of the request is appropriate under existing statutes, rules, and regulations and in the public interest.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The request for approval of DEP's updated service regulations included as Attachment 3 to its Amended Application is granted. This will allow DEP to omit monthly meter readings for customers on interval-billed rates.

2. The request for approval of the Companies' updated service regulations included as Attachments 3 and 4 to their Amended Application is granted. This will standardize the monthly billing period so that proration of fixed charges occurs when the billing month includes fewer than twenty-six (26) days or more than thirty-four (34) days.

3. The request for a limited waiver of Section III.A.2(a)-(b) of the Companies' Code of Conduct to allow for an automated review of a customer's payment history where the customer is transferring service from one Duke Energy electric utility jurisdiction to another is granted.

4. The request to extend the remittance period for non-residential customers from fifteen (15) days to twenty-five (25) days is granted.

5. The request for approval of the Companies' Quarterly Budget Billing Plan is granted.


6. The Companies shall file all relevant retail tariffs with the Commission and provide a copy to ORS within ten (10) days of receipt of this Order. The tariffs should be electronically filed in a text searchable PDF format using the Commission's DMS System (<https://dms.psc.sc.gov/>). An additional copy of any revised tariffs should be submitted via the E-Tariff system and a copy of any new tariffs should be sent via e-mail to etariff@psc.sc.gov to be included in the Commission's E-Tariff system (<https://etariff.psc.sc.gov/>). Each tariff sheet shall contain a reference to this Order and its effective date at the bottom of each page.

7. Any relief or requests not expressly granted herein are denied.

8. This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:





Florence P. Belser, Vice Chair
Public Service Commission of
South Carolina